

Bipartisan Agreement Reached on VA Reform Bill

7/28/2014

Over the weekend, I called on Speaker Boehner to postpone the upcoming August recess until Congress has voted on a compromise version of the Veterans Access to Care Act (H.R. 3230) to assure that each and every one of our heroes receives excellent and timely care and service as close to home as possible.

Today, I am pleased to tell you that House and Senate negotiators have announced an agreement that paves the way for such a vote.

While we don't yet have all the details, it's clear the bill will allocate substantial new resources to allow veterans who live in rural areas – like much of our Eighth District – to receive outside care if they reside more than 40 miles from a VA facility. That measure alone will ease travel stress for vets, save taxpayer dollars for travel reimbursement, and reduce appointment backlogs at VA clinics by allowing rural vets to receive care at non- V.A. facilities. The bill will also provide greater VA transparency by requiring outside independent assessment, allow for the hire of more doctors and nurses at existing VA clinics, make VA physicians' credentials publicly accessible, and implement new performance metrics.

Moreover, the bill will result in the addition of 27 new VA facilities across the nation, and the hiring of new staff to improve both care and service.

I will keep you posted as we know more. Meanwhile, I want to again thank the veterans and their families who took time to attend my Veterans Round Tables earlier this summer in Duluth, Brainerd, Hibbing and Little Falls. I conveyed your concerns to the conferees on this legislation, and clearly, you made a difference.

Sincerely,

Rick